

# BIZARRO: STRANGE TALES OF HORROR

BY KADATH BIRD

## An Introduction from the author

These stories all had life originally online. You probably already know this, if you bought this book. I decided to get into the hang of writing horror stories because my comedy, just didn't work on paper. They work great visually, but on paper they come out weird. Finding inspiration from the works of Stephen King, Neil Gaiman (Who is truly more of a fantasy writer) and old folklore, I took twisted ideas from my mind and made them into these tales. They may scare you, they may not, but either way, I hope you can enjoy their almost rhythmic telling and twisted settings. Enjoy! If you have any questions or comments, please email me at [harsawa@gmail.com](mailto:harsawa@gmail.com), or go ahead and send a letter on down to my home in Utah.

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## Tree Of Life

All throughout my childhood, I lived with my grandmother. It hurt my parents, but when I was 12 they allowed me to go live with her, permanently. She was a fun old woman, bright and surprising well aged. She knew lots about technology, and invented things as well as fixed them. But all through my life with her, I wondered about the tree in the backyard. The tree was blackened and dark, as if it had been burned away. It had no leaves, no life on it at all. "It's dead". My grandmother explained to me. "But it'll bloom again. It is a tree of life." When I was a child, I asked her "Why can't you fix it, grandma? You seem to be able to fix so much else." Her response seemed grim, "Those things are items of technology, items that are meant to be fixed by humanity. But maybe someday, I can fix this tree." She died when I was 18 years old, and some may say that's too old an age for a boy to cry, but I cried all through the night. She

made a special request in her will, that she be buried not in a graveyard, but beneath her dead tree.

We carried out her request, and buried her beneath the tree, the supposed tree of life. I still lived on that old farm, and every day I would go out and put flowers on her grave, but one day I noticed something odd; a blossom, red as blood growing from that tree. I seemed to ignore it's existence at first, but as the days went by, the tree grew large and tall, more blood red blossoms sprouting from it's branches. One day, I decided to feel the tree, and found this to be a major mistake! As I put my hand on the trees now lively pinkish-gray trunk, no longer black, I heard a squish and felt warm fluid run down my hand onto my arm. I screamed, and as I pulled my hand back, the bark came off with my hand, but it wasn't bark. It was human flesh.

My grandmother had called it a tree of life. I was terrified to do so, but one day, I dug up her grave, and what I saw horrified me. The tree had taken root inside her body, and was sapping away the preservatives that kept the flesh on her bones. As I put the dirt back over her body, I remembered what she had said to me as a child; *"Maybe someday, I can fix this tree."*

## The Ghosts of Old London Alley

Next to the old house I live in, there is no garage or neighbour, but before the next house, there is an alley. The alley leads to a gully. The gully is filled with junk, and sludge, and even a little bit of a stream still remains. Sometimes I like to go back there and play paintball with my boyfriend and some of his friends, the broken down cars and trashcans made great cover, and so did the trees, though we usually avoided the water. But we never took the alley down to that gully, we always took the hill behind my friends house.

I got a bad feeling from that alley. Sure, it was never used, to my knowledge, but it bothered me. In fact, it downright terrified me. Why? Well, for starters, at night, hell, sometimes even at day, I hear women screaming. My mum tells me it's just my imagination. A typical response. Another thing is just the fact that no one uses it. I see people pass it, and sometimes they look down that alley blankly, as if they were thinking, they will shudder and then walk on. Back in the 1800's, I suspect that the ground was covered with cobblestones, as you can see their remains sinking in the earth that is there now. A part of old London.

I was in bed on the eve of my 17th birthday, and once again, I heard a woman screaming from that little alleyway. I looked out my window to try and see what was going on, but other than a crimson spatter apparent on the other buildings wall, I could not see into alley because of the darkness, and because of a strange mist. I grabbed my coat, went into the

kitchen and grabbed my pocket knife; "Use it for protection, you know how vile men can be.." my mum had told me. I don't think men specifically are vile, but I know that the human race certainly has the potential to be vile. I walked out slowly, very slowly. There was a strange mist, white, except for an odd tinge of red, flowing out from the alley. As I got closer to it, and breathed it in, I smelled gas. Anaesthesia. It was dizzying, but not enough to put me out. More smells, alcohol and iodine, as I got even closer. When I finally stepped into the alley, my shoes clattered against the cobblestone walkway on the floor. My house was no longer next door, but an apothecary took its place. I figured I must have been hallucinating.

The mist finally cleared and I saw a man, clad in a top hat and a flowing over coat packing up surgical gear. There were crimson stains on the cobblestone beneath his feet and on the wall, but there was no body. When he looked at me as he passed, he smiled, I could not quite make out his face. I began to run away down towards the gully. I found myself hitting a wall instead. I remember my mum mentioning that it used to be underground... The man in the coat came back and called, asking if I was lost and needed help. I figured maybe he wasn't so bad. He had surgical tools, maybe he was a police doctor, and not the murderer. Maybe I came too late to stop him. I walked back towards him and told him that I didn't need help, really, I only live about a block away, but he offered a ride in his coach anyways. While we were in the coach, he offered me a vine of ripe grapes. My favourite fruit! I hadn't had them in awhile, and I gladly accepted, and as I was plucking them and putting them down my mouth, I noticed he opened his briefcase of surgical tools. He took out a tool, oddly cyclical. He put it around my throat, a perfect fit. I don't know what he did next, but my world is now black.

### Under the bed *(Just a note, this one is meant to be more of a macabre comedy :P)*

You've probably been told as a kid, 'It's not real, there's nothing under your bed'. It's something our parents tell all of us, and eventually the boogeymen all vanish to myth. That's what I have always believed.

But things are different here. My parents are scared. Always screaming, always crying, always whining and moaning and complaining about a monster under their bed. And every night, I have to go in and tuck them in and tell them 'It's not real, there's nothing under your bed'.

If there is something I value above anything else, it's sleep. But when my parents get a'scared there ain't no one who can sleep. But I've learned to drown them out, like white noise. But this night in particular, they were louder. And I couldn't sleep. I picked up a broom and banged the ceiling, and they shushed for a minute. But then the screaming again. I

picked up the broom and banged the ceiling again. They stopped, but it only took them a minute before they started hollering again. This time I was mad. I began to stamp upstairs, but suddenly, the screaming stopped, and I stopped on the stairs and listened. They were quiet for a whole 3 minutes, so I stamped back down.

When I got to my room, I snuggled into bed, but was startled awake, not by a noise but a feeling. Something was wet, and falling onto me. I look at the ceiling, and lo and behold, it's covered and blood, and what goes up must come down. So now they were interrupting precious sleep by bleeding on me! The nerve of some people! I stamped upstairs, I shouldn't have to do this twice in one night, and opened the door to their room. As I opened it, I looked upon my parents, but they sure didn't look like my parents. These people were inside out. I heard a noise, sloppy and wet, coming from under their bed. Suddenly, an eye shot at me, and I wondered if this was some kind of gag. I got to my knees, and looked under the bed, and saw a monster, horrible and red. He was feasting upon what was left of my dad. He saw me, but he did not eat me, he in fact, payed me. "Here yah go kid, thanks for staying downstairs tonight. I would've gotten 'em earlier, but I'm damn terrified of children!" I took the money, and stamped downstairs, and placed some napkins on the ceiling. I finally slept, and slept peacefully I did.

## Hypothermia

The wind and snow was cold. No... beyond cold. It was freezing. Why I had left the cabin... I don't truly understand myself. I was wearing nothing but a bathrobe, and my bare feet stung each step I took through the snow. But I could feel myself getting closer... but I ask myself, getting closer to what? That is exactly what I intend to find out. Since early this morning, it had called my name. It had called my name, and I am answering. But with each stinging step, I grow colder and colder..

Somewhere, high in the mountains, a phone rang. The phone lay inside of a modernized cabin, of glass and plaster, not wood. A large sign on the outside read 'RESORT EMERGENCY SERVICES'. A clock below the sign alerted anyone who cared to read that it was 3:34 in the morning. The phone rang twice more, until finally, someone answered. "Hello, Olympus resort police service services, please state your emergency." said a gruff voice, angered to have been awoken so early. "Hello? This is Harry Bardsley.. I'm in Cabin 32, with my son, but my wife, Celie, has gone missing. I haven't seen her for over 6 hours." replied a nervous voice, obviously a mans, nervous and distorted over static. The gruff voice responded, "Sir, when was the last time you saw this... Celie? Interesting name.. anyways, when did you last see her? Was she with anyone?" There was a brief pause, when finally Harry responded. "I just told you, it was about 6 hours ago. We had gotten out of the bath when she told me she heard someone calling for her, and she just.. left the cabin in her bathrobe." "You say someone was calling for her?" asked the gruff voice. "Well, I didn't hear anybody, but she insisted that somebody was calling 'Celie, Celie, are you out there, Celie?' and that's when she left." Harry's voice became even more nervous by the second. The gruff voice sighed, then, "Okay, Mr. Bardsley, calm down. We can't do

anything now, but we can send a search team soon as the sun comes up.” But Harry did not calm down. “But she will have frozen to death by sun up!! You've got to send someone out now!” The gruff voice did not like being yelled at, “Listen Mr. Bardsley, if you even want a search team, you are going to wait till sun up. I'm sorry, but there is NOTHING we can do until then. Goodnight to you.” The gruff voice hung the phone up. Inside cabin 32, Harry slumped against the wall and began to weep.

I've found a cave. I'm afraid of it, but it beats the cold, and I can hear water inside. I'm hoping maybe it's a hot spring, they have those here. I need to warm up my feet, or I might get the frost bite. You might be wondering why I'm afraid of the cave? The simple answer is; I think my friend, or enemy, may be in here. As I got closer to it I continued to hear someone, a'calling out my name, and it sounded like it was inside the cave. In fact, I can still hear it. It's an echo now... a bone chilling echo. My heart is pounding, and I put my hand on my breast to calm it but now I can feel my heart pounding through my hand, and feeling the explosive but unsteady rhythm makes me even more nervous. The cave gets darker as I venture further in, following the voice that has been driving me into this strange land. The echoes seem to become a single sound again, and I stop, my heart pounding so hard I can hear it. And the voice stops calling my name. It begins to whisper, softly. 'You shall burn into a fine dust as I drag you to hell!'

Harry sat in his slump, staring at his watch and ticking away every second, minute, quarter hour, half hour, hour, until finally his watch reads 5:50, when he hears his wives voice, calling from a distance. “Harry? Harry? Are you out there, Harry?” He stood up, nervously but at the same time excitedly, and looked out the window to see if she was really there. As he looked out, he saw a shadow walking ominously away from the cabin. He couldn't tell if it was his wife, but the voice was definitely hers, so he grabbed his jacket and ran out, and followed the foot prints. He could tell she had even forgotten her shoes, as there were toe marks as well. He figured she must have frost bite, and he knew it was painful. He continued to follow the foot prints, when he noticed something odd, they began to stretch, with an odd black mark in the heel. He picked at the black mark, it was ash, hot ash. He followed the footprints as they got longer, more hot ash filled them. He heard his wives voice again, but this time it was not calling for him, it was screaming, “It burns! Oh dear god, it burns!”. Harry began to ran, and as he did, the shadow he saw as he left the cabin came into view again, fire at it's heels. He yelled at it to stop, and finally, it stopped moving, and ran off. The flames died down and he ran towards what from his position, appeared to be a pile of ash. When he approached it, he could tell it was his wife, but everything up to her mid stomach had been burned away, and what was left of her was covered in burns. “Oh my god.. oh my god.. what happened to you?” Celie smiled and weakly managed to say, “It burned me to a fine dust, it was taking me to hell”. Harry searched his coat for his cell phone, and despite the fact that it read 'No Signal' he tried calling the emergency services.

Harry stood over me, this didn't look like hell, he must have saved me. But I made a promise with the creature.. it would give me warmth, save me from the hypothermia if it could take me to hell. I found I had no legs, just a chest and a head, arms and my hands. Covered in burns, it hurt, it hurt. I looked away from him, fiddling stupidly with his cell phone, and saw the creature on a hill above me. “Come Celie, come with me.” It came closer and closer, and I reached out my hand, smiling, and it took my hand and once again began to pull. This time I did not scream. The heat saved me from the hypothermia. And as the creature drug me, I slowly turned more and more into ash, until...

Harry finally realized that Celie was gone. He stood up and screamed, and followed the ash marks once again, until he saw the shadow at the top of the hill. Ashes blew down from the top of the

hill, and he heard a voice, low and seductive, yet at the same time terrifying "She is gone. Now she is nothing but fine dust. Come with me, and you can join her." Harry began to cry, he was too late to save his wife, his beloved wife. He lay down in the snow, and accepted defeat, and the creature came and drug him. Drug him into a fine dust, and pulled his soul into hell.

That morning, men from the Olympus Resort Emergency Services entered Cabin 32. In it, they found nothing but a 3 month old baby boy, and beside it, two piles of fine ash. Harry and Celie Bardsley were never heard from again, and many people believe they froze to death in the snow. But the search still goes on for their bodies.

### Malignant arachnid

Ever since I was a kid, I had a strange lump on my head. I just thought it was a bump, until a doctor told me, "Soon, you'll be dead!". He told me it was cancerous, and since I hadn't had it checked out before, it had grown malignant. I still thought it was just a bump, that lump. Or maybe an insect bite.. yeah, that was what it was! An insect bite. That would explain why it was always itching. My house is full of spiders and mosquitoes, the mosquitoes fly high to avoid the spiders, but then we got spiders that liked to sit on the ceiling. But my doctor didn't care, "You'll be dead soon. Unless you've got good healthcare. But even then, you'll still be dead in a month or two." I wanted him to study the lump further, I wouldn't believe it, and thankfully, my doctor is friendly, and we set up an appointment to check out that itchy bump on my head to prove it wasn't cancerous.

Well, the MRI didn't do anything. But the x-ray came up with something odd. "I generally don't like to sound funny, but there's a party in that lump on your head, look at the x-rays, at those little dots. They're moving around, we have no idea what they could be!" But I had a feeling I knew what they could be. I had read rumors, legends, and tales, but I didn't think it was possible. I explained my theory to the doctor, and he laughed, "That's impossible, Spider's egg sacks are made from silk, not flesh!" but even so, I was afraid, that someday from that lump or bump on my head, fresh spiders would burst, and true to the doctors word, I'd probably be dead.

I waited, what felt like quite a few months, but was in fact only one week, and the lump swelled and swelled but no spiders came out in a leak. I began to get headaches, long ones at that. They drove me crazy, and one night I scratched. Scratched at the lump at my head. Scratched hard, and to my terror it split into 3 fleshy slices. Blood began to pour down all around my head, it felt as if an egg was cracked, except it was red. And then something else began to pour out, tiny and black, I laughed, for what reason, I do not know, but the next second I passed out, and I believe the doctor put it right, I feel pretty dead right now.

## Shadows over Whitechapel

The clock struck midnight. The darkness had already swept over Whitechapel, and all who stirred outside were beasts of violence and sexuality. I lived inside one of the few humble homes, no one ever partied here. No one was ever attacked by Jack the ripper. No one ever chased the dragon. But that doesn't mean that my house was exempt from the darkness.

Many people don't react when they hear the term 'the darkness' as, well, it's not all that strange for it to become dark at night. But here in Whitechapel, we speak of something else when we speak of the darkness. The darkness is, what you may call a curse over our town. Men & women will go missing, but they will come back in a most strange predicament. They come back, merely as a shadow of themselves. Their bodies have ceased to exist, but you will see their ominous outline climbing stairs, and sometimes even hear their disembodied voices. No one knows what caused the darkness, no one truly knows how to fight it off, other than light, but the shadows multiply in light, so while the light might save yourself from the darkness, it won't save you from it's victims.

I live, as I said, in a humble home with a wife, and twin daughters. I try to avoid the whores and the opiate users on the streets, but sometimes it is hard. I sometimes feel that they themselves have been affected by the darkness, and they turn to evil ways to avoid 'visits' from their loved ones. Every night, the darkness rolls over our home, I worry about my Linda, I worry about Emma and Alessa. I worry less about myself, as I am not selfish, but I do fear that one day it will grab me.

I stayed up late, this night. I sat in my living room, reading by candle light, when something caught my eye. Shadows. Strange shadows. On my ceiling, a million hands clawed their way over each other and up the stairs, I froze in fear but then quickly reacted and blew out my candle. The room went as dark as it possibly could, I could not see a thing. But I feared that it did not work, as I heard the sound of unknown men whispering behind me, and finally, laughing that began loud and then slowed down, distorted and sad. I quickly saw fit to relight my candle, but saw no shadows that were out of the ordinary. I walked up stairs, wishing I could run but I knew the wind would put out my only source of light. I entered my bedroom, and let out a sigh of relief as I saw a lump under the blankets that I knew would be my wife. But as I entered the children's room, my candle poured hot wax onto my hand. I shook it and shouted in pain, throwing the candle to the floor. I am lucky that the wind put the flame out before it hit said floor, or we would be in flames. My shout awoke Linda, who came in with a candle, this time in a lamp, but it did not awake my children. We walked in fear towards their beds, and found they were gone. I began to let out tears, ever so slightly but Linda began to literally cry aloud. I held her in my arms, but hope once returned, childish laughter was heard downstairs. Maybe they were playing out of bed, sometimes they've done that.

Linda & I ran downstairs, she held her lamp in front of her, and we searched the common room for any sign of the girls. I stood in horror, I saw them. But not as I had hoped to see them. As the light passed over the two chairs we had made for them, I saw the chairs rock, as if they were possessed, but in them each was a shadow. I could hear their voices whispering inaudible. In fear and sadness, I stammered and Linda finally noticed. The first words I could make out 'Mummy, Daddy'. They were speaking to us. Their shadows grew larger, and so did their voices. Were these really our beloved children?? 'Why don't you join us here, Mummy, Daddy?' I heard more whispering. Men, women, more children. The shadows of a thousand hands clawed their way down the sides of the walls and onto the floor, and as Linda tried feebly to open the lamp and blow it out, the hands grabbed onto her legs, and I saw her slowly fall through the floor, as the shadow-hands pulled her down into an unknown abyss, tears ran down her face as she said goodbye, before finally vanishing and was nothing but a silhouette. I grabbed her lamp and quickly snuffed it out. I heard the voices still whispering, but without the light, they could not catch me. Still holding Linda's lamp, I opened the compartment and dumped out the oil onto the floor. I took a match, and struck it, tossing it onto the oil and watching it start. I could see the shadows once more, but I ran for the door, and made it.

As I walked out into the seedy underworld of Whitechapel, I realized now why the people did what they did. I entered a nearby opium den, my entire body sweaty with fear, and lay down by a pipe and began to smoke. And as I did, I saw the lights in the room grow brighter, but they did not hurt my eyes, they relaxed them, and the shadows went away. My mind was at ease, and I knew now why these people were not affected by the darkness.

### The Grinning Man

Neil Klamp was walking down the street one early morning, wearing a nice tweed jacket, his black spatz clicking against the sidewalk with an almost tap-dance like rhythm. He had a spring in his step, and a twinkle in his eye, he was getting married, and he wanted the whole world to know. He told Chester, the local hobo, who was having trouble keeping his pants up. But Neil didn't care. He let the deli owner know, he even let a passing mutt know. But there was a man, wearing an odd top hat, that slightly slumped over his head, leaning against the wall, that Neil didn't want to know his big news. This man also had a grin on his face, ear to ear, as if someone had cut it there, nice and wide. Wider than one should be able to grin.

As Neil approached the grinning man his spring fell out of his step, and his twinkle dimmed from his eye, and he slowly and cautiously tried to avoid the man. But as he passed, the man put out a cane in one swift, but stiff movement, directly in front of him, blocking Neil



on his way. "Uhm, excuse me." muttered Neil, "I have somewhere to go, and I must be going now." The grinning man stared up from under his slumped top hat and began to chuckle, a chuckle that would scare the devil. "But I've been watching you, my good chum" he said in between laughs "You've stopped to talk to everyone, to tell them a secret, a good one at that!" the mans grin grew hideously wider. "I've got no secrets, now let me pass." said Neil, still muttering but getting slightly more confident. The grinning man raised his cane, right up to Neil's neck. He then pushed a secret trigger, and a blade popped out from the end. "Everyone tells me their secrets, I'm such a cheerful man, why don't you tell me peacefully, and you can hop along to where ever it is, cheerfully. Just." The blade extended longer. "Like." Even longer, Neil began to shake and perspire. "Meeeeeeeeeee." The grinning man's grin now grew so wide, the laws of physics were sure to have cried.

Neil screamed, hoping to get a rise from one of the passerbys, but they could not hear him, or so it seemed. The blade then curved, as if it had a life of it's own, it tapped Neil's cheek, as the grinning man tutted him for screaming. "Now about your secret then? Or how about secrets? Everyone has to have something to hide." The grin grew even more wide. Neil stood there, in a last attempt to be brave, that he had nothing to hide. But as the words were leaving his lips, the blade grew longer, he could no longer see the tip. He felt cold steel coil around his neck, till the tip of the blade came 'round again, and began to tighten it's grip. Blood began to trickle, the warm liquid was quite a contrast to the cold steel. The grinning man widened his grin, his eyes seemed to pop, and Neil could take it no longer. His lips fell loose.

He told the man of his marriage, but in truth, that was something to disparage, when compared to the other things that fell from his mouth. "My fiancée, she was a whore!" Admitted Neil, "That was how I even met her!" the blade began to loosen it's grip, but the blade still tasted his blood, there was more from his lip. "I murdered a man.. not one, but two! And in cold blood, no less!" the blade finally loosened enough that it no longer cut into his skin, but it still coiled around his neck neatly. The mans grin did not cease, it grew larger, and he laughed with every secret with ease. "My mum did not poison herself, it was I who put laudenem and arsenic in her drink each night!" Secret, after cruel secret poured out of his lips, till finally the blade unwound from his neck. He gasped and grabbed his throat, it still bled, but not enough to make him pass out. The grinning man pulled him up, and bandaged his neck. He took off his strange top hat, spun it in his hands, and bowed to Neil. "I thank you good sir, I shall rid you of sin." But Neil had wished that the man would leave, but he did not. The grinning man still had his blade out, he raised it and slashed. Neil felt blood, run down his face. The grinning man produced from his hat, a small personal mirror, and handed it to Neil. Neil saw the man had cut a horrific grin into his jaw. Neil screamed, unheard by all, as the grinning man put back on his hat, and walked away, laughing the laughter that would scare even a thousand devils back into hell.

3:00

I don't need an alarm clock anymore.

Every morning, every goddamn morning I wake up at 3:00. 3:00, right on the dot. No more, no less. The idea of going back to sleep? Hah. My body won't let me. If I try to, I get sick to my stomach, and am forced to jump right back up again and rush towards the bathroom. So what do I do at 3:00 in the morning? I wander. I wander aimlessly around my home, searching for something. I didn't find it in my basement, noooo. I didn't find it in the somewhat-of-butnotquite-an-attic, nooooo. I didn't find it in my cat, who now lies in awkward chunks on the floor. Once dawn broke, I was able to nap peacefully.

3:00 am that next day, I went searching, searching for *it* again. I brought along a drill, and went outside. I started off small, picking through peoples filthy garbage. I didn't find it. I noticed one of the neighbours hadn't pulled their cans to the curb quite yet, lazy, lazy, lazy. I walked into their drive way, and went through their cans, when their dog started barking at me. I told it to be quite, I told it with my drill. And while I was there, I searched it as well. Nothing was found, nothing of use. I then noticed a light, a light in their house, the dog had alerted it's owner, and he was on his way out. I found a spade, encrusted with dirt, held it hard, just like a bat, and waited for him to come stepping out. And as he did, he came to the yard, and as he looked over his poor dog I slammed him on the head. You can guess what came next. Humans are much larger than dogs or cats, and this man was big, 3 times my size, I could've lived in him if I wanted, but what I was looking for was not inside, and I shambled home, as the sun begun to rise.

I sat in my arm chair, all riddled with glee, watching the news, recounting my acts in the night, they called me a 'murderer' hah! Wait till they find out, it was not murder, just a simple search on my part. They will be quite surprised, I might think. And as I sat there, grinning in glee, my cat came up and rubbed his head all over me. I smiled in relief, "Oh good, your back." and pet my cat, and then laughed and laughed.

3:00 am the next morning there was someone in my house. He stood at the foot of my bed, holding a dog on a leash. I recognized him as my neighbour, tall and wide, I laughed and giggled, as blood poured down the neck I had severed. "How did you reattach that, my good chum? It doesn't matter, I'm glad you're all better!" he was not laughing, in fact he frowned even worse. I stood up from my bed, and picked up his head. "Oh dear, it looks like it's still loose. But here's something we can all do with." I turned it upside down, and put it back

on "There, we turned that frown right upside down!" But he still did not seem amused. He straightened his head, and grabbed my own and pulled it close to his lips. His teeth were sharp, and harsh, as he began to pull away the skin and flesh, and devour my brains. "So you've become a zombie, eh? I'm pretty sure the church doesn't look kindly on voodoo..." I said, but he didn't listen, he kept eating my head. Eventually pain surged through my body, and as I lost control of my limbs it convulsed and twitched, and soon he dropped me on the floor, where the dog ate the rest of me.

The next morning, at 3:00 am, the police were here, they looked over my body. I still thought, but I couldn't speak or move. They saw the drill in my hand, and somehow concluded, that I had ripped my own stomach open and devoured my own brains. Stupid cops, I wish I could move, I would search inside them, they have what I want, ignorance. Ignorance is bliss.

## The Trader

I walked up the mountain side, parched of thirst and ready to collapse, when the sound of jingling steel clashed through the air. The sound, carried by the wind was welcome to my ears and I climbed onwards, following the sound hoping to find a man who would trade goods for wealth. Eventually the ground became level, and there stood a man, in a wonderous blue robe, holding a staff covered with diamonds and steel, the breeze blowing them together, clashing and making the sound that brought me here. Behind him was a stall, shoddily built and covered in red stains I expected was paint. I could not see inside, for it was not open, two doors with golden skulls protruding from them covered the inside. I collapsed on the ground, panting and breathing as hard as I could. I grabbed my heart and then my throat. The man planted his staff in the ground, and held out his hand, I grabbed it as he helped me up. I staggered a little then balanced myself. I asked him if he had anything to drink.

He opened the cabinet-like stall without uttering a word, spreading his cloak so that I could not see inside. When he turned round, he had in his hands a chalice of fine red wine. I sipped it, it was a welcome taste to my lips. Both sweet from it's origins and bitter with it's alcohol, but refreshing none the less. He held out his hand, I knew what he expected. I pulled out a sack of gold coins, and asked him how many he required. He reached into the sack and pulled out only a single coin, and for the first time spoke, but as he spoke, his mouth did not move. "This coin shall fill the spot from where the wine came from." He opened the stall once again, spreading his cloak wide as he did so that I could not see inside, and he placed the coin into a seemingly invisible slot. Nothing happened, not to my knowledge. I got up, thanked him, and was on my way.

I had found a stream higher up in the mountain, it slaked my thirst but I found nothing edible to slake my hunger. I had to backtrack, but as soon as I had thought that, the sound of steel jingling and clashing in the wind came closer and I knew it was the trader. He came around the corner, pulling his stall as he went, and as he saw me he smiled and I told him that I was hungry. He opened his stall, this time holding a knife, my sight obscured by his cloak. I saw his hands gracefully move and when he turned 'round he had in his hand a fresh, juicy steak. I pulled out my sack of coins as he lit a fire to cook, I asked him how much, and once again he took the coins himself. He took 6 this time. "These coins should fill the hole from where the meat has come from." His mouth did not move, it did not open once, I began to wonder, many things about him. After the food was cooked and I ate, I was on my way, and it was getting quite late.

Once I reached my destination, high on the mountain, there was no cave as my friend back home had said, and it had begun to rain, and it was much too late to be hiking back. I did not plan to camp outside, but as soon as I thought that, the trader came up the hike. I told him I needed shelter, he opened his stall, his strange, strange stall and came out with dry canvas, sheets and supports. He made a tent, and inside the tent a bed. I became suspicious of this tent, the canvas was coloured that of human skin, it was cold to the touch, and certainly not dry on the inside. The rods were white, but had cracks and had an almost wooden texture, but they would not break as easily as wood, no, they were as tough as bone. The only normal thing about this tent was my sheet and my bed. I asked the trader how much I should pay, and he smiled and told me that gold would not satisfy him, I must owe him someday. He left, and left his strange, strange stall behind, and I lay down to sleep in my strange, strange tent.

Curiosity awoke me in the middle of the night, and I walked to his stall, with, I admit, just a bit of fright. I pulled the handles and slowly it opened, I nearly went mad at what I saw in the stall. A sickening sight, the torso of a man, right next to that of a woman. The woman had chunks missing from the body, my gold pieces filled the spots where they had been taken. The man had no skin, bones had been stolen, I finally realized, where the trader got all his goods. I grabbed my things, shut the stall, and ran down the hike, hoping to get home. But I heard the sound of steel crashing, and around the corner came the trader, smiling at me. He said I owed him, one human body to replace the bone and flesh used to make my shelter, he pulled out his blade and took to my throat.

## Tick Tock

Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. The grandfather clock spoke. It said to me, Burn. Them. Burn. Them. But all my husband and my daughter heard was Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. And when the bells

chime midnight, my head would spin and in my bed I would writhe. Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. Cut. Them. Cut. Them. A cacophony of laughter kept me from slumber, I hid under my blankets. Chills ran up my spine, and once again the clock would chime. Bing. Bong. Bing. Bong. Bury. Them. Bury. Them. The cacophony rose to a chorus, and I could take it no longer!

I went into our garage and grabbed a can of gasoline, I tied my husband and my daughter to a tree, I danced around said tree, laughing madly, pouring the gasoline as they looked at me sadly, until their feet and the tree were covered in the gasoline. I lit a match, threw it on the patch of grass where the gasoline dripped from their toes and bark, and watched the tree blaze up. I laughed and laughed, madder and madder, hearing their muffled screams as the flames licked their feet and their clothes and their hands and their chest, their whole body! The tree burned up, black as ash, no leaves remained, a branch fell off, but the tree was still there, and inside my head I heard the grandfather clock. Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. Cut. Them. Cut. Them.

I ran back to the garage, and found an ax, perfect and sharp and saw that their ropes had burned away, and their charred bodies were still squirming on the ground. I raised the ax and chopped them away, into slices so fine they could be mistaken for giant sashimi! The cacophony of laughter died off, and I dropped the ax, and went to my house, and climbed into bed. But just that morning, right at noon, the grandfather clock chimed. Bing. Bong. Bing. Bong. The laughter raised once again, and my ears began to bleed, I covered them in pain and fear, and ran outside, but it only got louder! I looked upon the charred and mutilated corpses of my husband and daughter, not remembering or realizing what I had done. I screamed and cried, and saw the ax, suddenly, it begun to look extremely friendly. Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. A family dead. Homicide and suicide. A family dead. Homicide and suicide.

### The reapers garden

Every spring when the harvest came in, I would walk outside, into the cool humid air, carrying a scythe to cut down the grass and plants before me. Many people saw it as an outlandish practice in such a modern era why would I use such a primitive tool? It got the job done. Every night, I'd sit on my porch rocking with a cigar in my mouth, smoke billowing out into beautiful shapes that danced gracefully as the cherry lit my gaunt face. People would see me from afar, seeing nothing but bone and being frightened away from me. No one ever came into my garden, no one ever came near me. It was a lonely life, hacking away at a garden with a scythe.

But then one day, someone trespassed in my garden. A lost young woman who was tired and cold. She was naked, her face was pale. I gave her some warm clothes, and sat her by the fireside. "Why aren't you afraid of me?" I asked her, my cigar nearly burning to ash. "I'm already in your domain. I chose to come here." She said this with chattering teeth, the clothes and the fire did not seem to warm her at all. I did not understand what she was saying. "Let me see your blade," she said. "It is all that can warm me." I went out to my shack, and found my

scythe. Moonlight fell through cracks in the wood, and my bony arm seemed even paler than before. I ignored it, and went inside.

"What is it you want from me?" I asked her. "Death. I jumped off a bridge, straight into the river, and because you were not there, I simply froze in the waters for nearly a year, pain and agony, until I finally saw you from afar, harvesting in your garden." she said. "But.. I'm not death! I'm simply a farmer." I became scared, my hands trembled with my blade in my hand. "You weren't death. But death has left our world, and a new reaper has been chosen. You have his blade, please, release me from purgatory, only then can I leave you, and only then can I rest." I raised my blade in terror, I would never see myself harming someone innocent, and I hacked off her head in one fell swoop. Blood spurted and dripped down her neck, her head and body hit the floor, I could tell it was smiling, and then her spirit appeared before me. "I feel warm.." was all she said, before vanishing.

The next day, I went to harvest my crops, like I always did, but when I did so, I looked in terror as they bled, and I realized that I was no longer harvesting crops. I was harvesting souls.

## The Tumor

When I was born, they called me 'The Tumor.' I would spread fear through people, and eventually, they would die. Everyone believes that they died of the many psychological disturbances I put fed their minds, spoonful by spoonful of paranoia, schizophrenia, MPD, psychosis, but in truth, I am a cancer. I was a cancer to my mother, I was a cancer to my father. Hence, I am a tumor. And I am malignant.

BIRTH: The day I was born, I was born a normal, healthy baby boy. But the doctor was sick at the time, light headed and woozy, he had no idea what he was doing. He stuck his hand in the orange container with the symbol, once an imperial symbol to the Japanese, but now a symbol of disease and hazard. Bio-Hazard. He pulled his hand out, blood dripped from his hand onto the floor as he laughed like a madman. He walked over to me, and snatched my from my mothers breast, and trickled the blood down my throat. I could not scream and cry like a normal baby should have, but as the blood went down my throat and my tiny ears rang with my parents screaming to get me back, I screamed, and even though I was a newborn baby, I remember feeling the diseases. The bio-hazards. They changed me.

MOTHER: My mother was the first to go. I was 3 years old, and my malignancy was already spreading through the air. She became paranoid, afraid to approach me; and to approach her meant a bottle of mace to my face. An entire bottle. My head grew cysts and boils, and when my dad joked; "Now there's a face only a mother could love!" my mum grabbed a knife and said "Not even a mother, George my dear, not even a mother. I want to cut those boils off, cut them off and rid them of their poison!" she yelled, but my father stopped her. I was not allowed out of the house, besides car rides. I had to stay in the car in the stifling heat, but occasionally, I would see someone walk by and stare into the car at me. I would see tears of blood drain down their eyes, sometimes they would run off, or bash the back door of the car declaring that I was the son of the devil. One time, someone had a gun. They pointed it at me, but the crimson tears flowed down her once lovely face, and she turned it towards her and fired a shot, square in her brain. I could smell the cancer in the air, a tumor had grown on her brain, and she knew she would die anyways. That woman, was my mother.

FATHER: My father lasted longer than any of them. He would hide in the other room to avoid me, but he had claustrophobia. He would whimper and cower in the corner of his small, small room as the darkness came, and even during the day I would hear his whimpering. My cancer seeped through the walls, poisoning the house, and one day, my father was looking at me. I was aged 8, and I had to sit in a wheel chair with a head brace. The tumor inside my own head had grown to the point I could not handle the weight. But somehow, I did not die from it. It seemed the more I gave to people, the longer I lived. As he stared at me, he collapsed. I called 911, and an ambulance came quickly. They tried to help him, but he died. I asked them to perform an autopsy, and when the results came in... They found tumors. Tumors in his brain. Tumors on his lungs. Even a tumor in his breast. I was sickened to find his name and legacy inside a book of world records one time.

MID-LIFE: I became 50, and many people have died. Anyone who comes within contact of me, dies. I am no longer human, I am simply a tumor. A lump of flesh containing tangled molecules. My head grew larger over the years, my hands had melted away, and rooted themselves into the floor. I hadn't used them in so long, it took me until I was 48 to notice my feet had already melted. And as I sat in my chair, I slowly melted down onto the floor. A lump of flesh. Nothing more.

DEATH: Someone actually bought this house. A couple that seems to care more about carnal relations than love. I hear them all the time, and I wonder if my cancer has poisoned the house. Eventually, the noises stopped. And I knew they were dead. I was 89 years old, merely a lump of flesh on the floor. But there was one thing keeping me alive; the tumor in my brain. When people sucked away my cancer, I lived. It took another 100 years before the house was condemned, and I could feel blood trickling down my head. It had simply grown too large. The tumor burst my head apart with ease, and I saw my own brain fall onto the floor. All that was left of my humanity... But the tumor grew, it grew over me, and it ate me away. The cancer finally caught up to me.

## These old walls

These old walls. Four to a room, two to a staircase. There was nothing odd about them when I moved out to this old rural farmhouse. I picked this spot because it was away from civilization-miles away. I hate people, I hate the city. I hate everything about both those things, so out here in the desert, this old rural house still standing, the most civilization I see is the occasional passing family car, presumably taking their kids to some theme park in the next state over. It's a waste of time if you ask me.

These old walls. Painted a different colour in each room, only fragments of the colour remain in the dilapidation from the years this house has stood, but the strange thing is how thick they still are. You think they would be wasting away. I took out a hammer and a nail, and began to hang a picture on these bare walls. The nail would begin to enter the walls, but then I would hear a gurgling sound, and it would fall out. I pounded harder, the gurgling continued but I held the nail in and pounded again. It stayed, but the sound coming from the walls continued, and a fresh black and red liquid began to slowly pour out from where I put the nail, the wind

blew hard around the house, and it sighed, almost angrily.

These old walls. They talk, they talk with the wind, but it's nothing you couldn't expect from such an old house. But at night, even when there is no wind blowing through these harsh lands, I hear sighing, almost like breathing, and in the darkness, the walls move. They close in on me, and then I hear a sigh, and they return to their original position. Merely hallucinations of the dark, I've had them before, maybe they are even callbacks to a day when my morning drink would be spiked with nothing more than LSD.

These old walls. You already know they bleed. These old walls, they cry and they sigh, real tears, real blood, real voices. I wrote them all off as hallucinations in the past, but I know now that they are far from simple tricks of the mind. They have been happening too often... And the house is angry with me. Angry for disturbing it, and I feel the need to know *why* this house is like this. I don't believe in ghosts, I don't believe in hauntings, but there is definitely something here... I can feel it breathe down my neck every night.

These old walls are driving me mad. I decided the only way I could solve my problem was to try and find the root, I went out to my chopping block and grabbed my axe and walked into one of the few empty rooms in the house. The walls still showed a tint of yellow wallpaper, otherwise they were as dilapidated as the rest of the house. I took my axe, and slammed it into the wall. They screamed, a howling of the wind to most people, but to me it was screaming. The blood literally poured out, but I kept hacking through the wood ignoring it's screams and sighs, and finally, a body fell out of the wall. I reached my hand into the hole it fell out of, it seemed too small for a whole body to fall out of as it did, and I felt more flesh. More bone. More blood. I pulled my hand out and began to hack at the bodies inside and at the hole I had made. It widened, and more screams were to be heard as bodies began to pile. I got to my knees, and laughed madly. Once the wall was empty, I had taken everything else, the wall began to lean and crumble. It had been these bodies that kept the walls standing for so long, and no doubt, the other walls had their fair share. I did what any sane person would have done by then- leave.

Those old walls, they weren't always there. It was once a burial ground and a church, but when the bodies were exhumed the people did not want to reburial them, and they did not have the mortar to keep the new building standing, so they simply pushed the bodies into the walls to keep the building standing. And except for the one I had crumbled, the house is still there, with it's old walls, standing for an eternity.

## Watchdog

They called him "illsick," old man "illsick." His property was off limits to family, friends, anybody



who could gain his quarantine. Only doctors passed into his house. Dressed in hazard suits, always disturbing the neighbours. People also believe he has had a history of disturbed and violent actions, another part of his namesake of Mr. "Ilsick." His body is ill, and his mind is sick.

Kids loved to trespass on his land and mock him from on the ground. He did not like that, not at all. So he had the doctors hire him a watchdog; A fine German sheppard trained to attack anyone, many believed that if it ever met it's owner it would even attack him. Every night, the dog howled. It howled and howled at nothing and no-one. It drove us all crazy, night and day. Stupid kids would taunt the dog so that it howled during the day as well. Even Mr. Ilsick would yell from his window at the dog to "shut it's f\*\*king trap" lest he "pull it inside out with a pair of old, rusty, salad tongs" to quote one of his bizarre benders, heard throughout the street just as loud as the dog's constant howling and growling.

Days passed and the strange would become the ordinary, Mr. Ilsick's strange yellings, the dogs howling, the hazmat covered doctors walking in and out of his house. But one day, Mr. Ilsick became better, and his quarantine was lifted. But he kept that dog, continued to yell at it, and he threatened it all the time, but in truth we think he was afraid of the dog. He would never enter his own back yards or his front lawn when he would leave his house, to avoid being seen by the dog, and maybe something else. But each night, they both yelled in futility at each other, until Mr. Ilsick lived up to his name one night.

And on that night, the dog didn't howl. Mr. Ilsick didn't yell, all was quiet on the street, and people slept peacefully. But the peace would be broken in the morning, on a close inspection of Mr. Ilsick's yard, entrails and organs would be found strewn across the yard, and when people went to investigate, they were recognized as dog organs. But no blood was to be found, no blood at all. No blood in the yard, no blood anywhere at all. The only blood found was dried, and ironically, on a pair of old, rusty, salad tongs. It was clear who had done it, it was almost too obvious for everyone on this street, but when they found Mr. Ilsick, his condition and location, would not be so obvious.

The howling returned that night. But it was much more guttural, almost as if it was imitated by another animal, or even a man. It was coming from the yard across the street, another family that owned a watchdog. Whimpering was heard before they could get downstairs to checkout the noise coming from their yard, but when they found it it was empty, except for their dogs body, it's throat torn out by sharp teeth. This continued to happen down the avenues, until one day, an investigation was put out on Mr. Ilsick, who had gone missing and was known to have killed his dog, but when they went to his house, they noticed in the backyard, a stalky German Sheppard watching them intently. The cops did a double take, before entering the back yard. The dog growled, when it stood on it's hind legs, and they had found Mr. Ilsick, wearing the skin of his dog, acting as if he was a dog, guarding his property,

and taking out any 'competitors'. I watched from my window next door, as he tore the throats out of the cops, with evidently sharp teeth.

## Hours and routine

The day begins at 6 am. I kiss my wife, Haruka, on the forehead, she smiles but stays asleep, beautiful in the rising sunlight as it pours over her face and her deep red hair. I put on a coat, I eat breakfast, I pour dog food in Gangu's bowl, the day continues at 7 am. I walk through the shroud that covers Sapporo, oddly, I miss the crowded streets of Tokyo. The fog has always scared me here, but at least we have the best beer here. I always giggle at my stupid little joke.

I arrive at my office, it's the tallest building in the town, despite only being 5 stories high, one story taller than the apartment complex nearby. Work begins at 8 am. Hours pass, I do not think about them very often. At 12 pm, lunch begins. At 1 pm, lunch ends and work resumes. I ignore the hours till I get off work, at 6 pm, the day begins to end, along with work. I walk home, the sea mist thick in the air, it always scares me. I see shadows in the fog.

Shadows of men & women, long gone. Ghosts that think they are still there, crying for someone to love, naked as the day they were born. Sometimes they talk to me, especially the women. I try not to answer, because if I do, they think they are alive. One time one of the women ran up to me, and pressed her soft body against mine and asked me to touch her breasts, I told her I was married. And tears of blood ran down her face as it rotted away, I pushed her off in terror and ran away.

At 7 pm I arrive at home, I pet the dog and have dinner with Haruka. We talk about our days. Haruka has a job as well, she works for a voice studio, and does voice overs for national geographic documentaries like 'Taboo'. She would be into real anthropology, but she never passed college. She frowned at me. "I had a dream today, a dream about Yumi & Akira." I saw tears swirl in her eyes. "I thought we came here to forget about them." I told her, anger and sadness boiling inside me. "How can you forget your children? What kind of parent just forgets about them?" Haruka then left the room, and then the house.

At 9 pm, I climbed into bed and took my medication, if Haruka were here, we would be making love, it felt strange for my routine to be broken.

My routine began again the next day, except Haruka was not in bed. It was strange. The routine continued normally though, from 6 am, 7 am, 8 am, 12 pm, 6 pm, 7 pm, and 9 pm. All without Haruka though. I became worried. The next morning, my routine changed.

I awoke at 4 am. Fog was seeping into my house, I curled up, terrified at who I might meet, what living dead was hiding in the fog now in my house. I stood up and walked downstairs, and had breakfast. I poured food into Gangu's bowl, I pet him as he walked in and he looked at me with his sad, droopy eyes. At 5 am I left my house for work. As I walked out, into the fog, terrified of the people stuck in limbo, I noticed a red streak in the sidewalk. I followed it, cautiously. It was blood, there was no doubt about that. I followed it, and heard familiar crying.

Three shadows sat in the distance, I could tell they were all crying. As I approached, the largest one in the middle stood up and put it's hands in front of the two smaller ones eyes and I heard a familiar voice again, "Don't follow me." The trail of blood stopped where the shadow began, and as it came closer I saw blood dripping from it. I backed in terror, but found myself backing into a wall. It wasn't there before! As my vision became clearer, I saw the figure of a woman. Tall, beautiful dark red hair, small but gorgeous breasts, the body of a goddess, but the face was ravaged by death. Blood dripped from the eyes that were no longer there, and I realized I was staring at my darling Haruka. She said to me that she had to rejoin her children, but since I wanted to forget her name, she knew the only way to rejoin them was in limbo. For the first time since their death, I cried. "I could not forget Akira & Yumi.. no parent can forget their children.." She looked at me with her eyeless sockets, and for a second, her face was cleared of blood and all beauty returned to her, and she held out her soft hand "Then join me. Join us." I was afraid of the fog. I was afraid of changing my routine, but I took a knife from my pocket, and at 8 am, I cut open my stomach, and let my soul enter limbo.

But little did I know, even the dead had a routine. At 4 am the fog would roll in from the waters, and I would wake up, Haruka, Akira & Yumi appearing by my side, and at 5 we would cry to each other, missing true life, at 8, work would begin, and we would beg people to bring us back to life, at 12 the sun would force us to hide in crags and crevices, and when the fog came back as the sun went down, we would ask people for life once again, in vain, but then at midnight, the fog would vanish, and we would sleep in true death for a pleasant 4 hours.